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ABSTRACT

In 1996, Lakeland Community College (Ohio) participated in the American Association of Community Colleges' Exploring America's Communities project, which works to strengthen the instruction of American history, literature, and culture at community colleges. The primary objective of the team's approach has been to identify strategies for enhancing the institutional climate for the conversation on American pluralism. The specific goals included: (1) establishment of a new course, Multicultural Literary Studies (MLS); (2) formation of a task force on American pluralism; (3) establishment of a resource center; (4) proposal for a new general education outcome for the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Science with attention to American Pluralism and identity; and (5) proposal for a new major college goal on pluralism to prepare for accreditation. Goals One, Two, and Three have been accomplished. Goal Four is in the discussion stage and is expected to require two to three years to complete. Goal Five will be addressed in 1998, as the college prepares a self-study for continuing accreditation. Challenges faced by the college included faculty and student resistance, institutional inertia, and structural barriers. Remaining work includes renewed marketing of the MLS course; identifying current instructional content and methods; faculty development activities; coordinating academic, continuing education, and student activities; and planning for student involvement. The team's efforts have served as a foundation for a permanent commitment community discussion. (HAA)

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Lakeland Community College

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Exploring America's Communities

A Report of Progress Made In Meeting Team Goals

I. Lakeland Community College Profile

Serving Lake County in northeast Ohio, the college's service district is bounded by Lake Erie to the north, rural Ashtabula County to the east, and urban Cuyahoga County, the home of Cleveland, to the west. The 1990 census showed a population of 215,500 (up 1.3% from 1980). Sixty three percent of the district's population is between the ages of 18 and 64. In the 1990 census, 96.9% of the district's population was white and 3% was minority (up from 2.2% in 1980), including 1.6% Black, .6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .7% Hispanic. The per capita income in Lake County in 1993 was $20,450, while for Ohio it was $19,040.

Lakeland's fall, 1996, student credit enrollment was 8378, and the full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment was 4300. The percentage of women attending is 60%. The population of minority students, 5.1% of total, has risen by 22 % over the past five years. It is expected that this population will continue to increase.

II. Goals of Lakeland's Action Plan

From the beginning of their involvement in the project, the primary objective of the team's approach has been to identify strategies for enhancing the institutional climate for the conversation on American pluralism. From the beginning, the problem was how to make the conversation acceptable as both a subject for debate and a basis for action to effect changes. To this end, the team designed and implemented the following specific goals:

(1) establishment of a new course, Multicultural Literary Studies;

(2) formation of a representative task force on American Pluralism;

(3) establishment of a resource center of curricular and bibliographical material;

(4) proposal for a new general education outcome for the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Science which reflects attention to American Pluralism and Identity;

(5) proposal for a new major college goal on pluralism to prepare for accreditation..

III. Progress on Meeting the Goals

Goal One of the action plan, establishing the new course in multicultural literary studies, has been achieved. Meryl Schwartz wrote the course proposal and obtained Curriculum Committee approval in late April. The course was scheduled for fall quarter, 1996. Posters were distributed, a promotional piece was printed in the college course schedule, and fliers were distributed to faculty asking for their help in promoting it. However, the course failed to attract enough students to make instruction viable. It is scheduled for spring, 1997, and a stronger marketing campaign is planned.

The new course is designed to allow different thematic emphases each time it is taught. For the opening version, the theme is "Growing up in America." A variety of readings and films will be assigned, and students will be invited to survey the rich multiplicity of American experiences and compare them to their personal backgrounds. As stated in the new catalog description, "The course will address questions of social cohesion and division; the effects of history and social systems on individual experience; and the way literature and film both reflect and shape our perceptions of ourselves and members of different cultural groups."

Goal Two of the plan has been accomplished. As originally scheduled, the team met with the college's major joint academic planning group (Vice President's Academic Advisory Council) in May, and obtained approval to form a Task Force on American Pluralism. Membership includes

six faculty from five divisions, two staff members, and three administrators. The members met several times during fall quarter and began work to (1) identify current instructional activities in multicultural studies; (2) plan faculty development activities; and (3) coordinate academic, continuing education, and student activities programming.

During spring, 1996, team member Rollie Santos designed a questionnaire to survey current faculty instructional practices in the area of multicultural studies. The questionnaire was intended to provide the task force with information about the state of instructional design and the levels of commitment to this subject. After Dr. Santos collected the responses and tabulated the results, he distributed a summary analysis to the faculty. In addition, he submitted his paper, *Faculty's Perceptions of Pluralism: A Lakeland Community College Study*, to the ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges and was notified in October that the paper had been accepted for inclusion in the ERIC collection.

The task force's work on faculty development, the second area of its charge, began during the opening week of fall quarter, 1996. During the annual fall conference for faculty, staff, and administrators, the team scheduled a two hour session titled "Pluralism and Pedagogy: Developing Multicultural Curricula for Lakeland Classrooms." Although the session was scheduled opposite a popular technology fair, "Pluralism and Pedagogy" drew an estimated 45 people, primarily full-time faculty but also part-time faculty and administrators. The agenda was divided into three parts: a series of short presentations, a break to peruse assembled resources, and a workshop.

The event was chaired by team member and English instructor Meryl Schwartz, who was also the first presenter. After introductory remarks about the importance of multicultural education, Ms. Schwartz presented a brief overview of the history of multicultural curriculum transformation, including alternate schemata of the transformation process and a series of definitions, and she invited participants to take copies of the annotated bibliography of texts on multicultural education which she prepared. Another team member, Dean of Arts and Humanities Larry

Aufderheide, presented a short history of Lakeland's work on multicultural education, discussed the new North Central accreditation requirement that colleges demonstrate commitment in this area, and reviewed Lakeland's participation to date in the AACC American Pluralism and Identity Program. Sue Guthrie, immediate past chair of the curriculum committee and member of the college's degree review task force, reviewed the degree outcomes model that was adopted during 1995-96. Ms. Guthrie demonstrated how multicultural education was consistent with almost all of Lakeland's general education objectives. Team member and economics professor Rollie Santos then presented the results of the spring 1996 survey he had designed and tabulated, noting the range of attitudes to multicultural education that the survey had revealed. This part of the program concluded with a presentation by Loran Gulyas, social worker and sociology instructor. Mr. Gulyas discussed the pedagogical techniques he uses in sociology courses when discussing America's diversity. Faculty then broke into small groups and shared ideas and concerns.

Numerous positive responses to this program were received, and faculty have reported experimenting with some of the pedagogical techniques discussed. The team's challenge was to sustain the momentum achieved, and one way it did so was through the visit of Naomi Tutu to Lakeland's campus. Educator, lecturer, and anthropologist, Naomi Tutu is one of the daughters of Archbishop (emeritus) Desmond Tutu. Organizers for her visit included faculty, staff and administrators from the academic affairs, community education, and student services. Spearheading the activity was team member Meryl Schwartz, who received significant help from Michelle Posey Murphy, the Assistant Director for Cultural Diversity.

Naomi Tutu's visit comprised three main events. During the morning, she visited a human services class, "Dealing with Diversity," where she informally discussed her own experiences as an African student at an elite school in England. Over lunch, Ms. Tutu presented to the faculty, administration, and selected staff a discussion of multicultural education, focusing on the challenges South Africa faces in developing a post-apartheid, truly multicultural curriculum. Finally, during an evening lecture open to the community, Ms. Tutu spoke on "Overcoming Apartheid's Legacy." She evoked for the audience the experience of growing up under apartheid

and discussed the complex tasks South Africa faces in the areas of education and women's issues. Parallels to American concerns were implicit throughout the talk, and during the question period there was discussion of America's struggles with some of the same issues facing South Africa.

Goal Three, establishing a campus resource center, has been accomplished. Situated in the office of team member and Dean Larry Aufderheide, the Multicultural Studies Center consists of files of faculty syllabi, journal articles on pedagogy, course outlines, programs from other institutions, special issues of community college journals focusing on multicultural studies, and selected books with a similar focus. Work is currently underway to formalize a list of the Center's holdings and distribute it to the faculty. Notice has already gone out that faculty are welcome to visit the Center and browse the collection.

Goal Four, identifying American Pluralism as a general education outcome in Lakeland's degrees, is in the discussion stage. It is expected that such formal curricular transformation will require at least two to three years. The work of revising course outlines so that learning objectives based on pluralism will be explicit begins in the context of Lakeland's switch from quarters to semesters.

Goal Five, to propose a major college goal on pluralism, will be addressed in 1998, the year the college begins to prepare for self-study for continuing accreditation. It is expected that goals four and five will be addressed simultaneously as the college converts to semesters and prepares for the North Central visit.

IV. The Obstacles

Lakeland faces a number of challenges as it seeks to institutionalize a curriculum that more frequently and effectively addresses American pluralism. In addition to the twin problems of faculty and student resistance, as discussed in the team's original proposal, institutional inertia and structural barriers must be overcome.

Faculty resistance expresses itself in a variety of forms. Passive resistance was expressed through the low rate of response (25%) to the survey the team distributed in the spring of 1996. More active resistance could be seen in some returned surveys. Where faculty are not hostile to the idea of multicultural curriculum development, many resist nonetheless because of the work involved; because they believe the issues cannot be incorporated into their discipline or their already overloaded courses; or because they do not feel they are receiving sufficient incentive or support for this work.

Student resistance expresses itself in classroom responses to material currently in the curriculum and in reluctance to register for courses focusing on multicultural issues. The first attempt to market a new English course, "Multicultural Literary Studies," was unsuccessful. With only six students registered, the decision was made to postpone the first section of the course until the spring 1997 quarter. The marketing problems can be attributed to a number of factors beside lack of interest, including the lengthy period between spring marketing efforts and summer registration for the fall quarter; insufficient emphasis in publicity materials to the course's thematic approach; and the fact that the course is not yet part of the Ohio transfer module. Although the course will not be on the transfer module until 97-98, the team will take measures to correct the other problems faced. Already an optimum time-slot has been scheduled. Preparations for more mailings have been made, including mailings targeted to area teachers; publicity will focus on the course theme rather than its rather dry title; and publicity targeted to current students will coincide with the registration period for spring quarter.

V. The Work Remaining

In addition to renewed marketing of the new course on "Multicultural Literary Studies," and the activities planned for under goals two and three, the work remaining falls to Pluralism Task Force, which has set up four subcommittees. Subcommittee One is charged with identifying current instructional content and methods. They will be collecting syllabi and surveying the specific content and methods being used by faculty already integrating multicultural issues into their

courses. Subcommittee Two is charged with planning faculty development activities, including a funding proposal. They will develop a two-tiered faculty development program: the first tier will utilize internal expertise and operational budgets, and the second will draw on outside speakers whose expertise can help fill in internal gaps. Funding will be sought from both internal and external sources. Subcommittee Three is charged with coordinating academic, continuing education, and student activities programming. While it has already started an ambitious program of coordination, the subcommittee continues to investigate new avenues. Subcommittee Four is charged with planning for student involvement in the project. They are developing focus groups that can help both in marketing courses and in developing effective classroom approaches.

VI. The responses of Students and Colleagues

While one of the team members integrated into her fall quarter composition classes the questions posed by the "national conversation," the emphasis of our team's action plan lay elsewhere. Certainly consideration of what it means to be an American has been implicit in the conversations about curricular change the team members have had with colleagues, but practical and philosophical questions of curriculum and pedagogy have dominated discussions. In effect, the team has been laying the groundwork for institutionalizing a permanent commitment to classroom and community discussion of American pluralism and identity. The faculty and staff who have attended the programs to date want to increase their own expertise on America's diverse cultures and seek specific answers to their questions about integrating this material into their discipline and courses, building student interest, and responding to student resistance. The quality of these discussions has been high, with participants expressing a great deal of interest in preparing students to live in a diverse society, succeed in a global economy, behave in a manner consistent with social justice, and engage in the critical thinking skills that will enable all of the above. When composition students were asked to discuss what it means to be an American, they responded with varying degrees of interest, but demonstrated, over the course of a sustained unit of reading and writing about America's diversity, an ability to go well beyond the cliches of the "melting pot" to a serious consideration of the sources of unity and division in America's cultures.